

The Gramophone Shop, Inc.

Record Supplement

for

March, 1944

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CON	Continental	PAR	Paraclete
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D	Decca	V	Victor
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THE GRAMOPHONE SHOP, Inc.

18 EAST 48th STREET

290 PARK AVENUE

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The Gramophone Shop, Inc.

The World's Best Recorded Music
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Vol. IX

Record Supplement for March, 1944

No. 3

ARCADELT (JACOB)

ARCADELT: Ave Maria, transcribed by Carl McDonald & BACH: Fugue a la Gigue, transcribed by Lucien Cailliet. Boston "Pops" Orchestra, conducted by Arthur Fiedler. 12" record (2 sides) No. V-10-1070; price \$1.05.

Not received before our press deadline. To be reviewed in a forthcoming issue.

BACH (JOHANN SEBASTIAN)

BACH: Fugue a la Gigue, see ARCADELT: Ave Maria.

BACH: Triple (St. Anne) Fugue, E Flat. Joseph Bonnet (organ). 12" record (2 sides) No. V-11-8528; price \$1.05.

When an unquestioned chef d'oeuvre is given a forthright, knowing performance, it is time for applause. And when that performance is imprisoned in records with a minimum loss of its fine tonal qualities, the applause gives way to cheers.

Without further ado, then, let the news be widely spread that this is one of the best organ disks in the domestic record library—an imposing piece, crisply set forth in a reading that is admirably unfussy and unpretentious. Mr. Bonnet keeps the contrapuntal strands cleanly separated and builds to an effective climax without resorting to bombast.

"Crisp" is a carefully chosen word for the sound, for there are more sonorous and full-bodied recordings of an organ (Bonnet uses the Hammond in Gloucester, Mass.), but few will regard the lack of echo and reverberation on this disk as a liability. Surfaces are only fair.

BEETHOVEN (LUDWIG VAN)

BEETHOVEN: Quartet No. 15 in A Minor, Opus 132 ("Heiliger Dankesang"). Budapest String

Quartet. Five 12" records (10 sides) in Set CM-545†; price complete with album \$5.77.

Perhaps the most interesting of Beethoven's great last quartets, at least from a historical viewpoint, No. 15 was, despite its opus number, composed before either the quartet in B Flat Major, Opus 130, or the Quartet in C Sharp Minor, Opus 131.

As Paul Affelder points out in the unusually apt program notes issued with this album, "the last movement is certainly of earlier date, for it was originally conceived in the key of D Minor, and would seem to have been intended as an instrumental finale for the Ninth Symphony, afterwards displaced by the choral setting of Schiller's *Hymn to Joy*."

But it is doubtless the profoundly beautiful third movement which has the most fascinating background. In 1825, Beethoven was suddenly afflicted with a serious abdominal inflammation which forced him to abandon composition of the quartet and repair to a spa near Vienna. The *Adagio* was clearly composed after his recovery, for it bears the inscription, "Song of Thanksgiving to the Deity [*Heiliger Dankesang*]" on recovery from an illness, written in the Lydian mode."

There are already in print, both in previous issues of the SUPPLEMENT and elsewhere, so many encomiums for the performances of the Budapest group that little can be added. Suffice it that their reading here is every bit as vital and all-of-a-piece as we have come to expect from them, and that Columbia has maintained the fine standard of recording which has distinguished previous issues in this "series." Surfaces are exceptional for a domestic wartime release.

The competition is definitely outclassed. The version by the Busch Quartet (VM-490) was never more than satisfactory, and the old Lener Quartet album (CM-273), in addition to stylistic deficiencies, is of another recording vintage.

Enthusiasts for superb quartet music, definitively played, need hardly be told that CM-577 is a "must."

BRAHMS (JOHANNES)

BRAHMS: *Schicksalslied*, Opus 54 & *O Heiland, reiss die Himmel auf*, Opus 74, No. 2 (motet). New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Bruno Walter & Westminster Choir (in English), conducted by John Finley Williamson. Two 12" records (4 sides) in Set C-X223†; price complete with album \$2.62.

This is undoubtedly one of the most disappointing releases in months. Brahms' dramatic orchestral and choral setting of the poem, *Hyperion's Song of Destiny*, by the romantic German poet, Friedrich Holderlin, has long been crying for transference to disks, and with such a formidable array of talent assembled for the job, Columbia had every right to expect a monumental recording.

The results justify only deep regret for a muffed opportunity. Mr. Walter brings his famous warmth and vigor to the reading, and the chorus sings passionately. But the instrumental intonation is wayward, the horn-playing quite amateurish, and both choir and ensemble sound badly balanced. Sopranos shriek, tenors whisper, and orchestral and vocal bass registers are muffled and hollow.

Even purists will not object strongly to the translation, for only by carefully following the English text in the program notes can a listener be reasonably sure that the language isn't Sanskrit.

How many of these faults are due to the recording it is rather difficult to say. Certainly the "wobble" in the last grooves of the first two sides exceeds anything on recent disks, and surfaces are only fair. It is quite possible that the engineers are chiefly responsible, for the number of "peaks" on the high frequencies is almost inexcusable.

The motet on the odd fourth side fares somewhat better, perhaps because there is no distracting accompaniment. The singing is, even so, more audible than intelligible, and quite unevenly "miked".

For playing on a small phonograph in an intimate room, C-X223 is a reasonable investment, if simply for that portion of the music which can be heard. The owner of a high fidelity machine had best forego the expenditure.

CHAUSSON (ERNEST)

CHAUSSON: *Symphony in B Flat*, Opus 20. Chicago Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Frederick Stock. Four 12" records (8 sides) in Set VM-950†; price complete with album \$4.72.

Expectations about the present issue (see the SUPPLEMENT for February) are herewith triumphantly justified. Victor can well claim that this is "A Memorial to the late Frederick Stock", for the recording is vibrant and full, and the performance is certainly one of the conductor's best. He has met the challenge of this lush roman-

ticism with grace (yes!) and intelligence, and by pointing up its more individual orchestration at the expense of its conventionally Franckian harmonic development, he has actually done the composer a great service.

The performance is, even so, a memorial to Stock's faults as well as his virtues. Delicacy of attack and precision of playing have rarely been included among the manifold assets of the good Doctor and his beloved orchestra. But if even this vital reading contains ample evidence of the heavy hand and the erratic pitch, it is likewise indicative of the sincerity and loving care with which Stock approached every masterpiece of whatever school.

Surfaces are, unfortunately, no match for the good recording. Some sides are quite clean; others have annoying crackles and swishes, and the general "groove level" is high. But this will prevent only the most captious collector from enjoying the pleasantly Gallic Wagnerianism of VM-950.

COATES (ERIC)

COATES: *By the Sleepy Lagoon & Last Love (romance)*. London Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by the composer. 12" record (2 sides) No. C-7408M; price \$1.05.

The parenthetical description after the second of the above titles is not intended as facetiousness. The listing is taken from the record label and seems about as adequate as any other word for these better-than-average excerpts from the world's dinner music.

As the SUPPLEMENT suggested only last month (see February, 1944), "the music of Eric Coates is located in an indeterminate, perilous, but not necessarily inclement region of the musical map. . . . Perhaps he is a contemporary Victor Herbert, a better Albert Ketelby."

By the Sleepy Lagoon is probably his best-known work, if only for the tremendous success it enjoyed in recent years in swing band arrangements. It is here played "straight," in a pleasantly Kostelanetz style that makes a far less distracting background for conversation than the more exciting Tommy Dorsey version.

Its partner in charming mediocrity was paired, on the original English pressing, (C-DX966), with a concert waltz, *Footlights*, which became the odd fourth side on the American pressing of *Cinderella*, replacing *By the Sleepy Lagoon*. Q. E. D.

The recording is still satisfactorily lush, the surfaces smooth.

DEBUSSY (CLAUDE ACHILLES)

DEBUSSY: *Images—Gigues and Rondes de Printemps*. San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Pierre Monteux. Two 12" records (4 sides) in Set VM-954†; price complete with album \$2.62.

For at last supplying the too long unrecorded end movements of Debussy's fine orchestral triptych, *Images*, especially in such an all-round superior version, Victor deserves nothing but praise. M. Monteux has emphasized the music's brilliant coloring and rhythmic verve and has handled every harmonic detail with care and affection. He has been given superb cooperation by engineers who were sensitively attentive to even the most fragmentary solo.

If the recording, even so, does not seem definitive, the fault is certainly as much Debussy's and the orchestra's as it is Monteux's. One can only speculate what a reading might have been achieved if the end movements were of a quality with the better-known and more frequently performed middle section, *Iberia*, and if Monteux had been leading the men of the Boston Symphony.

In any case it is regrettable that Victor did not see fit to include the entire work in this album, to offset the patent weaknesses of Barbirolli's insensitive performance of *Iberia* in VM-460, which received far better treatment from the engineers than it deserved.

One can therefore be doubly grateful to Columbia for their fine recording (CM-491) of an excellent performance of this section by Fritz Reiner and the Pittsburgh Symphony, which sounds enough like Monteux's band to be its twin. For those who want a complete and highly satisfactory version of *Images*, therefore, simple juxtaposition of VM-954 and CM-491 is the answer.

DUPARC (HENRI)

DUPARC: Chanson Triste & MATTEI: Non è ver. John Charles Thomas (baritone) and Victor Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Frank Tours. 12" record (2 sides) No. V-11-8568; price \$1.05.

Not received before our press deadline. To be reviewed in a forthcoming issue.

DVORAK (ANTONIN)

DVORAK: Slavonic Dances No. 3, A Flat Major & No. 1, C Major. St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Vladimir Golschmann. 12" record (2 sides) No. V-11-8566; price \$1.05.

Not received before our press deadline. To be reviewed in a forthcoming issue.

ELGAR: Imperial March, Opus 32, see HOLST: The Planets.

ENESCO (GEORGES)

ENESCO: Roumanian Rhapsody No. 1. Arthur Whittemore and Jack Lowe (duo-pianists). 12" record (2 sides) No. V-11-8515; price \$1.05.

At a time when the shelves of record stores are left begging for an adequate supply of recognized recording classics, exactly why an understaffed, priority-bound company should waste good shellac and manpower on such

a pointless issue is a mystery only Victor can answer.

If Enesco's delightful rhapsody is second only to Ravel's *Bolero* in popular appeal, it certainly did not attain this status in an "arrangement" that divests the music of the subtle orchestral coloring which is its very life blood.

Two-piano teams, at least, may praise the adaptation, but they will not likely condone the performance of it. Messrs. Whittemore and Lowe pound out their grim travesty as if they, too, were angry about the whole thing. The recording is loud and boomy.

GRETCHANINOFF (ALEXANDER)

GRETCHANINOFF: Glory to Thee, O Lord (Two-fold Litany) & TCHESNOKOFF: Save Thy People, O God! General Platoff Don Cossack Chorus, conducted by Nicholas Kostrukoff. Baritone soloists: N. Khadarick (in the Gretchaninoff) & A. Zakhartchenko (in the Tchesnokoff). 12" record (2 sides) No. V-11-8514; price \$1.05.

One of the most unusual recordings on recent Victor lists in this coupling of impressive choral works by two grand old men of the last generation of Russian composers. Both reveal superficial influences of their more famous predecessors in the Russian Nationalist School, but each has clearly gone his own way, little influenced by modern innovations or the works of their contemporaries.

The world-famed Don Cossack Chorus, by their thrilling choral work on this disk, endow these dramatic paeans with a physical excitement wholly appropriate. Khadarick is the more robust and virile soloist, but it cannot be contended that Zakhartchenko's semi-lyric approach is out of character with the Tchesnokoff score, and his tone is warm.

Victor has summoned a fine acoustical background for the singing, and the surfaces are smooth. If you like music that's off the beaten path, this disk can be highly recommended.

HAYDN (FRANZ JOSEF)

HAYDN: L'Isola Disabitata—Overture. Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Fabien Sevitzky. 12" record (2 sides) No. V-11-8487; price \$1.05.

This charming little curtain-raiser may have been issued as a gentle reminder that "Papa" Haydn *did* write more than twenty operas and operettas. Or more realistically, Victor may simply be scraping the bottom shelf of its "icebox" of pre-Petrillo recordings.

Certainly the score is no masterpiece. But if it is a fair sample of the music to be found in Haydn's now-forgotten *azione teatrale*, an enterprising impresario might do well to revive *L'Isola Disabitata*.

The overture is in the conventional Italian style, with a slow introduction and a minuet middle section characteristic of the composer. Sevitzky and the Indianapolis

Symphony give the work a sympathetic run-through, and the technicians have done their task well.

V-11-8487 is a welcome addition to the current catalogue.

HOLST (GUSTAV)

HOLST: The Planets, Opus 32—Mars, Venus, Mercury, Jupiter & ELGAR: Imperial March, Opus 32. Toronto Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Sir Ernest MacMillan (in the Holst); BBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Sir Adrian Boult (in the Elgar). Four 12" records (8 sides) in Set VM-929†; price complete with album \$4.72.

On the basis of the first four (of seven) movements in this curious suite, one cannot easily avoid the suspicion that Holst's firm disavowal of all literary intent was so much balderdash. Indeed, it is almost impossible not to assume that the work will find greatest favor with devotees of Disney. For here is the potentially perfect accompaniment for a Silly Symphony.

By omitting the last three movements Sir Ernest MacMillan has, in fact, pointed up the symphonic architecture of the early parts of the score—the sinister first movement, the pastoral second, the scherzo-like third, and the pompously jovial fourth.

Interested parties had best forget Holst's pedantic nonsense about astrological significance, and settle down to enjoy an amusing (not always intentionally) bit of musical eclecticism. Fans of Rimsky-Korsakoff, Tchaikovsky, Ricard Strauss, Debussy, Stravinsky, and Sibelius will feel right at home in this pretentious work, for all of them are present in transparently Anglican disguise. (The third, and perhaps best, movement is a likably British hodgepodge of *Til Eulenspiegel* and the Nutcracker's *Danse de La Fee Dragee*. But let not the Anglophiles dismay; there's a rousing carol in the Jupiter).

Whatever its ultimate worth, this novelty has been well served by the Toronto Symphony and the engineers; Sir Ernest has quite properly emphasized the polytonal harmonies, the acrid rhythms, the contrasting moods. And the musicians take evident delight in their solos. Some instruments are occasionally a trifle distant from the microphone, but the recorded sound is clear and full. Surfaces are satisfactory.

The odd eighth side contains a typical Elgar march, composed in honor of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897. Sir Adrian Boult and the BBC Symphony supply the right amount of romp and circumstance.

LIAPOUNOFF (SERGIUS MIKHAILOVITCH)

LIAPOUNOFF: Leschinka, Op. 11—Caucasian Dance & Etude No. 10. Alexander Brailowsky (piano). 12" record (2 sides) No. V-11-8567; price \$1.05.

Not received before our press deadline. To be reviewed in a forthcoming issue.

MATTEL: Non è ver, see DUPARC: Chanson Triste.

SCHUMANN: Traumerei, Opus 15, No. 7, see TSCHAIKOWSKY: Solitude, Opus 73, No. 6.

STRAUSS (JOHANN JR.)

STRAUSS: On the Beautiful Blue Danube (waltz). NBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Arturo Toscanini. 12" record (2 sides) No. V-11-8580; price \$1.05.

Even if Maestro Toscanini had not long since evinced an apparent lack of sympathy with rhythm Viennese, his performance here would suggest that he was nothing if not bored by the assignment. The reading is hurried, badly phrased, and almost totally lacking in charm. The familiar Toscanini dynamics are blatantly in evidence, but they serve only to emphasize his hammer-and-tongs approach.

The recording is, as suggested, loud and resonant, and the surfaces clean. But the general orchestral sound is hard, the strings thick and coarse. The engineers thus make their own contribution to the over-all atmosphere of a military band concert.

In the face of the many fine issues on their surprisingly unhackneyed February list, Victor might well have spared the Maestro the embarrassment of making public this patent mistake.

SUK: Burleska, Opus 17, see WIENIAWSKI: Scherzo Tarantelle, Opus 16.

TSCHAIKOWSKY (PETER ILYITCH)

TSCHAIKOWSKY: Solitude, Opus 73, No. 6 (trans. by Stokowski) & SCHUMANN: Traumerei, Opus 15, No. 7 (trans. by Stokowski). All-American Orchestra, conducted by Leopold Stokowski. 12" record (2 sides) No. C-11982D; price \$1.05.

The consensus about the particular kind of music that results when those ominous words, "transcribed by Stokowski," are appended to the title of a selection is not likely to be changed by this issue.

The unpretentious accompaniment for Rathaus' German poem, *Weil ich wie einstmals allein*, which Tchaikovsky wrote just before his death in 1893, sounds not unlike a watered-down, short, vocal version of the last movement of his *Pathétique* Symphony, composed in the same year. As such it is rather moving, even in Vladimír Rosing's strained singing of a Russian translation on D-29048A, the only recording of the work in its original form.

By comparison, the orgy of Slavic despondency whipped up by the All-American orchestra turns solitude into sheer terror, and suggests nothing so much as a passage from the Stokowski version of Moussorgsky's *Night on Bald Mountain*.

The wonder is that, having done it once (V-14947) with the more luscious strings of the Philadelphia Orchestra, the conductor felt called upon to repeat the perform-

ance. Certainly C-11982D is louder than its predecessor, but the profit to the listener is questionable.

Perhaps Mr. Stokowski was simply seeking uniformity among the transcribers. The coupling on C-11892 is his own version of Schumann's *Traumerei*, whereas Charles O'Connell made the transcription of the *Andante* from Franck's *Grand Piece Symphonique*, which was the companion piece on the Victor disk.

Both transcribers might have spared themselves and the public all that trouble.

TSCHENOKOFF: *Save Thy People, O God!*, see **GRETCHANINOFF:** *Glory to Thee, O Lord* (Twofold Litany).

THOMAS (AMBROISE)

THOMAS: *Mignon—Overture*. NBC Symphony, conducted by Arturo Toscanini. 12" record (2 sides) No. V-11-8545; price \$1.05.

It is an interesting fact that most of the best examples on disks of Toscanini's unique orchestral magic are performances of excerpts from the grand operatic repertoire. It is a moot point whether this peculiar state of affairs is due to an effortless approach based on his years of conducting at the Metropolitan, at Salzburg, and elsewhere, or whether both he and the Victor engineers share a special affinity for Rossini, Wagner, and their contemporaries.

At any rate, in direct contrast to the Strauss (see above), here is a prime example of the almost routine glamour with which Toscanini can invest a tired orchestral warhorse when he really feels sympathetic with it and when the recording technicians have laid down the red carpet.

Lyrical and rhythmically Thomas' essentially musical comedy score is played to the hilt, with, if anything, a too precise attention to molding its phrases and electifying its melodies. Aside from an occasional coarseness of string texture, the sound is brilliant, clean, and almost overpoweringly resonant.

These facts having been duly noted, there should be little wonder that the quite satisfactory version by Fiedler and the Boston "Pops" Orchestra (V-12038) must quietly bow out of first place in the record listings.

WIENIAWSKI (HENRI)

WIENIAWSKI: *Scherzo Tarantelle*, Opus 16 & **SUK:** *Burleska*, Opus 17. Nathan Milstein (violin)

& Arthur Balsom (piano). 12" record (2 sides) No. C-71498D; price \$1.05.

Until now, the Heifetz-Sandor version of Wieniawski's familiar display piece (V-14323) has rated a decided preference, for the luscious Heifetz tone sang out sweetly and the piano provided an able accompaniment. But the conception was too wholeheartedly lyric, the sluggish tempos and dainty phrasing resulting in an inevitable loss of power.

By contrast the Temianka performance (D-25771) was a volcanic eruption. But the lovely Trio was fatally hurried, the passage work slurred, and the recording and surfaces a definite distraction.

The new Milstein neatly atones for the deficiencies of both others. He has appraised the virtuoso spirit of the work at its true value, with no attempt to endow its challenging patterns with a soul. His performance is forthright and vigorous, and Balsom's accompaniment sustains the excitement.

The recording is hard on Milstein's tone and the piano is a bit tinkly, but the disk is technically superior to either of its competitors. Surfaces are merely adequate.

The companion side contains an amusing trifle by Josef Suk, which has rather more legitimate musical interest, particularly in the greater role given to the piano. Milstein and Balsom traverse its contemporary rhythms and dissonant harmonies with great vivacity.

DICTION

WHITMAN (WALT)

WHITMAN: *Leaves of Grass* (selections). Ralph Bellamy (narrator). Four 12" records (8 sides) in Set VM-955; price complete with album \$4.72.

Only in recent years have the noble poems of America's great "gray poet" begun to receive the consideration and high regard they so deserve. Victor rates our sincerest commendation for endeavoring to make Whitman's verse conveniently available to listeners.

Since Mr. Bellamy, too, gives every indication of having approached the problem with great seriousness of purpose, it is with genuine regret that the report on the end results is something less than enthusiastic.

Perhaps the narrator was played false by praiseworthy efforts to let Whitman speak for himself. The fact remains that one's emotions are only mildly stirred by readings that tend too much to the prosaic.

Nor have the engineers convinced us that theirs was a labor of love. The narrator is carelessly "miked," so there is frequent muffling of words and more than one ear-shattering blast. Gritty surfaces are a distinct handicap.

VM-955 can be recommended only to schools, clubs, and anything-by-Whitman addicts. For the rest of us—try again, gentlemen, soon.

COLLECTIONS

SONGS BY LEAD BELLY. Lead Belly (Folk singer with guitar) & Sanders Terry (harmonica). Three 10" records (6 sides) in Set ASCH343A; price complete with album \$2.79.

The selections sung by this curious performer are:

How Long.	Irene (without harmonica).
Good Morning Blues.	On a Monday.
Ain't You Glad.	John Henry.

UP SWING. Tommy Dorsey, Glenn Miller, Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, and their orchestras. Four 10" records (8 sides) in Set V-P146; price complete with album \$2.62.

The swing "classics" (originally issued separately from 1936 to 1943) contained herein are:

Goodman—Stompin' at the Savoy
Don't Be That Way

Dorsey —Song of India
Yes, Indeed!

Shaw —Begin the Beguine
Lady Be Good

Miller —Tuxedo Junction
String of Pearls

WINGED VICTORY. Winged Victory Orchestra & Chorus, directed by Lt. Leonard de Paur. Two 12" records (4 sides) in Set D-263; price complete with album \$2.62.

Excerpts from the U. S. Army Air Force play, now a smash hit on Broadway, include:

My Dream Book of Memories (Sgt. David Rose).

Winged Victory (Rose)

Whiffenpoof Song (special lyrics by the play's author-director, Moss Hart)

The Army Air Corps (Robert Crawford)

SECOND REVIEWS

BACH (JOHANN SEBASTIAN)

BACH: 250th Anniversary Album. Philadelphia orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski. 5 12" records (10 sides) in Set VM-243†; price complete with album \$5.78.

"The lover of music who has never heard Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra, in the flesh, perform any of these arrangements has missed an unforgettable experience. Yet so indescribably vital are the reproducing powers of the latest RCA Victor recordings and instruments that reality itself could be no more overwhelming. In presenting this album set of Stokowski-Bach arrangements, RCA Victor feels proud to preserve for posterity this monumental achievement of Art and Science."

So reads the booklet which accompanies VM-243, and so reads, at least superficially, this review. There is little gainsaying the fact that hearing Dr. Stokowski perform these arrangements is an unforgettable experience, if that is a consummation devoutly to be wished.

With the improvement in recording techniques during the last nine years, Stokowski has achieved more "indescribably vital" recordings, but there can be little doubt that, for 1935, this was a monumental achievement. The conductor's familiar billowing and churning is almost too brilliantly manifest to the ear, and one can almost dip one's hands into the lava-like flow of sound. The orchestra, as such, plays superbly.

Those who have a taste for Stokowski's "free transcriptions" will surely find this album "overwhelming,"

for some of Bach's most magnificent music is included—the *Chaconne* from the *Second Partita in D Minor*, for unaccompanied violin; the *Chorale-Prelude*, "Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland"; the *Adagio* from the *Organ Toccata and Fugue in C Major*; the *Sociliano* from the *C Minor Sonata for violin and cembalo*; the hymn-melody, "Komm, susser Todd"; and the *Sarabande* from the *Third English Suite for piano*.

We have received a new shipment of this famous album, in both manual and automatic couplings.

CHABRIER (EMMANUEL)

CHABRIER: España. London Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. 12" record (2 sides), No. C-71250; price \$1.05.

Beecham and his beloved "Pill-harmonic" have done it again—taken an old warhorse, scrubbed and groomed it, entered it in the big money, and watched it gallop across the finish line several lengths ahead. And the result is all to the good of Anglo-American and Anglo-Iberian relations.

Old Doc Beecham makes it quite plain not only that Chabrier loved Spain, but that the Debussy of *Iberia* and the Ravel of *Rapsodie Espagnole* owe their predecessor more than a passing nod for indicating the way to capture that enthusiasm in music.

If your reviewer had not heard so many similar Beecham miracles in the past (witness his rejuvenation of the *Peer Gynt Suite No. 1*, the *Polovetsian Dances*, etc. etc.), he would not have believed it possible. But the miracle is here on wax—and well worth your attention.

The recording, like the performance, is resoundingly vibrant and energetic, with fortuitous attention to subtle dynamics and to the interrelation of rhythmic details. And the surfaces, happily, are among Columbia's best.

If you're a bit weary of Olde Spain, C-71250 is just the tonic you've been needing.

FRANCK (MELCHIOR)

FRANCK: Pavana, Tantz, Intrada & SCHEÏN: Paduana, Gagliarda, Courante Allemande, Tripla. Brass Ensemble conducted by Curt Sachs. 12" record (2 sides), No. AS-57; price \$2.10.

This single disk from Volume VI of the familiar collection of Renaissance, Baroque, and Rococo music recorded under the name of *L'Anthologie Sonore* is titled "The Instrumental Suite (Early 17th Century)". It contains eight short, stylized "dances" of the period, in the Italianate madrigal style which was just beginning to influence German instrumental composition. So far, exactly what you would expect.

But the music, conventional even then as to subject, gains uncommon interest both from its transitional character and its highly individual scoring (for brass choir), which emphasizes its experimental nature.

There is a pungent freshness even today in the crude polyphonic harmonies of these now obsolescent melodic rhythms, especially in the not exactly virtuoso manner in which the instruments are played on this disk. Considering the difficulty of their assignment, however, it is hardly

surprising that the musicians should come forth with a few sour notes.

L'Anthologie Sonore No. 57 is clearly intended more for musicologists than for addicts of Strauss waltzes, but if you have an open ear and a feeling for the past, you will find it the springboard to a new musical experience.

As with most of the disks in this unique library, the surfaces are beyond caviil, and the recording, considering its age and studio type, is excellent.

GREGORIAN CHANT

GREGORIAN CHANT: Easter Alleluia & Respond-Gradual, Les Paraphonistes de St.-Jean des Matines, directed by Guillaume de Van. Agop Agopian (soloist). 12" record (2 sides), No. AS-34; price \$2.10.

On first hearing, these 1,000 year-old chants may sound to the impious modern ear like something heard from outside a dentist's office—full of moans and groans and repetitious prolongation of tortured vowels.

The figure of speech is of course inept, because even for today's lay listener, there is something thrilling about this simple, yet complex music, if approached with a little sympathy. The polished Latin monotony, twining along in the linear pattern of the old modes, stirs up subtle remnants of mystery, of magic and tingling expectation.

Both the Easter Alleluia and the Respond Gradual (originally for the Festival of St. Agnes) are well-recorded without the irritating quaver and echo which so often dispels one's enjoyment of this type of music. The soloist sings with sincerity and skill, never exhibiting the unctuous affectation which is the death of good church music. He is supported by an excellent chorus.

To those familiar with Gregorian chants, this disk will be welcome indeed, for it is technically almost unique in the recorded library. As for the novice, here is a truly thrilling entree to a fascinating and exciting ancient musical world.

HAYDN (FRANZ JOSEF)

HAYDN: Trio No. 5 in E Flat Major. Jacques Fervier (piano), Jean Fournier (violin), Pierre Fournier (cello). 12" record (2 sides) No. AS-55; price \$2.10.

Unlike some of the more esoteric selections in L'Anthologie Sonore, here is an unquestioned masterpiece of immediate attraction and lasting value for average listener and music student alike.

A product of Haydn's mature powers (almost certainly of his fifth and last period), it displays abundant evidence of Mozart's influence in the variety of melodic and harmonic ideas and the delightful originality of their treatment.

Nor is it rigidly classic in either form or feeling. In the two movements played here there is more than one suggestion of the budding romanticism which was to flower in the greatest works of Beethoven and Schubert.

As such it could well be included in a trilogy with those towering trios of more recent recording vintage—the

Beethoven No. 7 ("Archduke"), Opus 97, and the Schubert No. 1, Op. 99, both in B Flat Major.

Since these were superbly performed for Victor engineers by no less an ensemble than Rubenstein, Heifetz, and Feuermann, let it be admitted at the outset that the Mm. Fevrier and Fournier are hardly in the same virtuoso class, but they do manage the interplay of their separate strands of sound with taste and intelligence, and the warmth of their playing is indicative of complete rapport.

Being several years older, the recording is naturally not as resonant as that accorded their more famous competitors, but except for an occasional boom from the cello, the sound is crisp and clear, and of more than adequate volume. The surfaces are, in fact, a distinct asset, for they are practically noiseless and quite free of the crackles and rattles which at times afflict the newer Victor pressings.

With 31 Haydn "Sonatas pour le piano accompagnée par le violin et le violon cello" still extant in score, L'Anthologie Sonore is to be highly commended for taking one of the first steps toward filling a gap which has too long existed in the recorded repertoire.

MOZART (WOLFGANG AMADEUS)

MOZART: Don Giovanni—Madamina, il catalogo è questo, Act I. & Ah, pieta, Signori miei, Act II. Salvatore Baccaloni with orchestra led by Erich Leinsdorf. 12" record (2 sides) No. C-71048-D; price \$1.05.

Signor Baccaloni's proved aptitude for basso-buffo roles in general and for Don Giovanni's Man Friday in particular needs no publicity from this corner. But if this recording is any criterion, the good Signor's Leporello must be seen to be believed. The subtle humor inherent in the libretto is more often than not underscored with all the delicacy of a train wreck.

Not that Columbia is unaware that a virtuoso performance is being preserved for posterity. The star occupies the center of the stage throughout, and vocally the recording is sonorous. So much so, in fact, that the singing occasionally sounds like bellowing while the amusing instrumental accompaniment is undervalued.

Less emphasis by the engineers on the basso and by Signor Baccaloni on the buffo qualities in these arias might well have given Mr. Leinsdorf and the orchestra a fairer share in the proceedings and have enabled them to exercise a restraining hand upon the star, instead of dutifully following his forceful but erratic lead.

This recording will prove least satisfactory to those who own the superb Glyndebourne Festival version of the complete opera (in which Baccaloni's carefully-controlled Leporello was a model of malicious wit and sophisticated buffoonery). But in spite of its obvious faults, the performance is sufficiently ingratiating to merit the attention of all other opera enthusiasts.

There was an occasional rattle and a periodic swish on the pressing I heard, but the surfaces were otherwise satisfactory by "duration" standards.

ROSSINI (GIOACHINO ANTONIO)

ROSSINI: *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*—A un dottore della mia sorte & **MOZART:** *Le Nozze di Figaro*—*La Vendetta*. Salvatore Baccaloni, with orchestra led by Erich Leinsdorf. 12" record (2 sides) No. C-71193-D; price \$1.05.

As in the *Don Giovanni* disk listed above, Signor Baccaloni here gives us a reasonable approximation of a famous performance of a familiar buffo role—in this case, Dr. Bartolo, as immortalized by Rossini and Mozart, respectively.

On an all-round basis of conception, articulation, and recording, Baccaloni's recorded Bartolo must take precedence over his non-Glyndebourne Leporello, not only for the better taste exercised by the star, but also for the richer "presence" of the orchestra, and the cleaner surfaces of the pressings (at least on the one I heard).

Fluid command of his native language is here again the source of some slovenly diction, nor does restraint in performance include his vocal projection, which is occasionally more than the ear finds pleasant. But neither fault is likely to bother anyone but a purist, especially in the face of such a dazzling display of virtuosity.

Those who have heard Baccaloni's Bartolo at the Metropolitan may be somewhat disappointed in its transference to disks, but it is certain to be relished by those who haven't. For them, this recording of two representative arias is a good introduction.

SCHEIN: *Paduana, Gagliarda, Courante, Allemande, Tripla*; see **FRANCK:** *Pavana, Tantz, Intrada*.

SCHUBERT (FRANZ)

SCHUBERT: *Standchen: Leise flehen meine Leiden & Du holde Kunst*. Gerhard Husch (baritone) & Hans Udo Muller (piano). 10" imported record (2 sides) No. HMV-DA4445; price \$1.57.

It is difficult for a reviewer not to get excited when an artist, by the simple expedient of singing intelligently and with effortless power, succeeds in endowing a too familiar song with all the radiance of newly discovered beauty. Such is the effect achieved by Herr Husch with Schubert's almost infamous "Serenade." The catalogues are full of recordings of this work by sopranos, tenors, baritones, violinists, choruses, and orchestras. But it is not often sung as sincerely and unpretentiously as Herr Husch does here, with results that are all to the gain of the listener.

The exquisite *Du Holde Kunst* comes off somewhat less well, and one might easily prefer both lieder sung by a soprano. These cavilling remarks aside, there is little else about HMV-DA4445 for anyone to quarrel with. Recording and surfaces are, of course, exemplary.

We are fortunate indeed to have received a new supply of this choice item, but the stock—as with all imports these days—is naturally limited.

STRAUSS (JOHANN JR.)

STRAUSS: *Die Fledermaus, Overture*. Berlin State Opera Orchestra, conducted by Bruno Walter. 12" record (2 sides), No. C-9080-M; price \$1.05.

If further proof were needed that sympathetic temperament is an essential factor in the effective statement of any music, this paean to a bygone Vienna is an excellent case in point. Walter leaves little doubt in the mind of the listener that this is fine music, whether you previously realized it or not.

His loving attention to every rhythmic and melodic nuance of the score results in a performance of irresistible drive and impact, of infectious gaiety and vitality.

The recording is outmoded by contemporary standards, the bass thin, the strings coarse, and the surfaces are only fair. But ears accustomed to the blatant, pedestrian run-through usually accorded this merry little masterpiece will find C-9080-M a distinct revelation.

STRAVINSKY (IGOR)

STRAVINSKY: *Le Sacre du Printemps (suite)*. New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra, conducted by the composer. Four 12" records (8 sides) in Set CM-417; price complete with album, \$4.72.

When a composer conducts and/or performs his own music, he does not necessarily achieve a definitive reading, even granting the obvious paradox that he of all men should best know what his work is intended to be and how it was intended to sound. Hindemith, for example, is among those whose records have occasionally proven the point.

Stravinsky is, himself, an indifferent conductor of the works of other composers, even those of the Russian Nationalists whom he so much admired. But with his own music his conducting is usually nothing short of magnificent. Give him, then, a fine orchestra and sensitive engineers, and one may feel reasonably sure of a recorded performance that should defy competition for years to come.

Such an album is CM-417, recorded a few years past with the New York Philharmonic. A quick comparison with Mr. Stokowski's outmoded recording (VM-74) suggests the reason for Stravinsky's superior reading—the slower tempos, the careful shading of instrumental byplay, the precise attention to over-all architecture.

Columbia bestowed a wealth of technical excellence on the performance, with the result that timbres are sharp and well-defined, instrumental balances just and even. A curious flatness of ensemble sound, a lack of resonance and reverberation, is a minor criticism, at worst.

Sacre du Printemps is by no means everybody's dish even thirty years after its riotous premiere. It is at the other end of the listening pole from *By the Sleepy Lagoon* (see Coates, above). But if you can take it (and a few hearings persuade most doubters), you may soon prize this album as one of the stalwarts of your collection.

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